



Women and Minority Veterans Quarterly NewsLetter

January - March 2008



Message From Deputy Secretary Barbara Ward

I assumed my appointed position as the Deputy Secretary of Women and Minority Veterans Affairs in June 2007. The over-all goal of my position is to ensure that women and minority veterans are aware of

their benefits, and that they know how to access and utilize available benefits and resources.

During the past six months, I have remained extremely busy traveling to visit each women veteran program manager and minority program coordinator located at the VA Medical Centers, as well as, those located at community-based outpatient clinics. These visits have helped me to understand the services that are available and to appreciate the challenges women and minority veterans face.

The remainder of my time has been devoted to outreach activities that have allowed me to attend various women veteran meetings to educate women veterans on their benefits, provide updates on legislation and to discuss relevant issues and activities of the California Department of Veterans Affairs. Additionally, I have spoken at several recognition events and am currently scheduling similar events for 2008.

My current priorities include: developing and distributing this quarterly newsletter, organizing and hosting a women veterans conference for this year, developing a women veteran survey tool and expanding existing outreach activities to women and minority veterans throughout the state.

We have made available a women veterans line at **916-653-2551** to provide you with assistance. I am determined to make this newsletter one that contains information that is useful and valuable to each of you. Therefore, I welcome your suggestions. Please remember that each of you can make a difference by reaching out to help another woman veteran!

Legislation to Benefit Veterans are Now Laws of the Land

Legislation signed by Governor **Arnold Schwarzenegger** this past session will benefit California veterans, military personnel and their families. One proposal provides important protections against predatory lenders; another one requires employers to allow the spouse of a service member, when he or she is on leave, to take up to 10 days of unpaid leave. Also included are bills that expand educational opportunities, waive certain vehicle fees, make voting easier, increase access to state retirement benefits and make it a crime to falsely represent himself or herself of having been awarded any military decoration or medal..

“These bills demonstrate California’s commitment to those who currently serve, those who have served and the families who have sacrificed so much to support them,” said Governor Schwarzenegger. “Our military community deserves strong consumer protections, continued educational opportunities and as much support as we can give their families.”

AB 7 Lieu: Armed Services Members -- Consumer Loans

Provides armed service members and their families a number of consumer credit services protections against predatory and deceptive lending practices and unlawful financial and investment schemes and allows California to enforce federal law.

AB 392 Lieu: Military Service -- Benefits

Requires a qualified employer to allow a qualified employee who is a spouse of a qualified

(Please see **Legislation** on page 2)

Good Luck Sheryl Schmidt!

Former Deputy Secretary for Women Veterans Affairs, Sheryl Schmidt has moved on to new pastures, accepting an appointment to the California Gambling Commission after more than 10 years as Deputy Secretary at the Department of Veterans Affairs. All of us at CDVA wish Sheryl much success in her new role as commissioner.



Coming Events in 2008

January

Jan. 19 - WAC Veterans Assoc. Chap. 96 meeting VFW Post 69, 2784 Stockton Blvd., Sacramento, Noon to 1430.

Jan. 19 - Women's Veterans Group, 1:00 pm IHop Restaurant, Fulkerth Rd off Hwy 99, Turlock, contact Rosemary Lindsey, (209) 634-7168.

February

Feb. 16 - WAC Veterans Assoc. Chap. 96 meeting VFW Post 69, 2784 Stockton Blvd. Sacramento, noon to 1430.

Feb. 16 - FFNV membership meeting, 11 am, Buddhist Community Center, 16450 Murphy Ave, Morgan Hill. Lawson.Sakai@gmail.com

Feb. 16 - Women's Veterans Group, 1:00pm, IHop Restaurant, Fulkerth Rd, off Hwy 99, Turlock, contact Rosemary Lindsey (209) 634-7168.

March

March 8 - Northern Ca, Health Care System, and American Legion Post 165, Vacaville Veterans Memorial Building, 549 Merchant Street, Vacaville, 9:00 to 4:00, contact: **Kathleen Heeren**, 707-447-3702

March 15 - WAC Veterans Assoc. Chap. 96 VFW Post 69, 2784 Stockton Blvd., Sacramento, Noon - 1430.

March 16 - 22 **Women's Military History Week** throughout the state.

March 21 - Annual Women Veterans Recognition Day, Fresno, Colvis Memorial District, 0800 - 12:00 noon.

New CDVA Website

Where to find women veterans resources --- you can access the women veterans materials by clicking on the resources link on CDVA's home page. Once there, you can access the roster and all other related information previously maintained on the website.

www.cdva.ca.gov

(**Legislation**, cont. from page 1)

member of the Armed Services, National Guard, or Reserves to take up to 10 days of unpaid leave while husband or wife is home on leave.

AB282 Cook: Makes it a crime for any person to falsely represent himself/herself to have been awarded any military decoration or medal with the intent to defraud.

AB 950 Salas: Public Postsecondary Education-- Residency -- Military

Extends the period of time in which non-California members of the Armed Forces are entitled to pay the lower in-state fees at California State University and the University of California.

SB 272 Runner: Gives members of the Armed Forces priority enrollment for California State University and California Community Colleges classes and requests the University of California to do the same.

SB 14 Negrete-Mcleod: Allows members of the California National Guard to qualify for membership in the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS), and to purchase additional PERS service credits.

AB 1528 Assembly Banking and Finance Committee

Prohibits false and deceptive marketing of financial services or products to service members, veterans and their families.

SB 386 Cogdill: Waives various fees on vehicles owned by the surviving spouse of a former prisoner of war (POW) or Congressional Medal of Honor recipient and allows the family to keep a special interest license plate as a remembrance of the deceased.



Special Notice!

We have received several calls on the women veterans line related to refinancing home loans due to difficult situations that have arisen within the mortgage industry. Unfortunately, CalVet does not have the legal authority to refinance home mortgages at this time. However, a legislative solution is currently being explored.

If you are in the market to purchase a home. A CalVet loan can save you money and protect your investment for your family. You can take advantage of lower market interest rates with a low or no down payment. Additionally, eligibility has been expanded to assist more veterans who are seeking to buy a home. You may pre-qualify for a CalVet loan by applying online via the CDVA website: www.cdva.ca.gov/CalVetloans/Default.aspx.

For those service members who find themselves in a difficult situation as a result of a non-conventional loan or because of activation and deployment, there are certain protections within state and federal law that could help you, including:

- ♦ The Service members Civil Relief Act of 2003 (SCRA) formerly known as the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act of 1940, is a federal law that gives all military members some important rights as they enter active duty or are called to deployment.
- ♦ One benefit of the SCRA is the ability to reduce your mortgage interest rate to 6% under certain circumstances.
- ♦ The California Military Families Financial Relief Act allows for the deferral of mortgage payments for members of the reserves or National Guard who are called to active duty.

If you need assistance, please contact the CalVet Customer Services Unit at (800) 952-5626 or (916) 505-8362



Clinical Services and Research Updates for Women Veterans

The VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System recently announced its newest improvements to the delivery of much needed services for women veterans, including new research programs to better access and improve health needs for these women.

The West Los Angeles VA Medical Center has new walk-in services that provide additional clinic availability to accompany returning women veterans from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom at the West LA Medical Center. Appointments are available every Tuesday and Friday from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm.

Additionally, the West LA VA Medical Center has installed a new full-film digital mammography unit. This new technology will allow for more mammograms per day than was previously possible.

The Women's Dual Diagnosis Recovery Program (DDRP) is an outpatient program for women veterans with a history of substance abuse and trauma. The DDRP services are offered at both LA Ambulatory Care Center and the Community-based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in the San Gabriel Valley.

For more information call Dr. **Kimberly Newsom** or **Tamika Woodard**, MSW at 213-253-2677 ext. (1)4754 or ext. 4732. The LA Ambulatory Care Center, downtown has established a specialty women's health clinic that provides gender-specific care once or twice a month. Plans are to expand these services.

As the role women play in our modern military expands, the health needs of these veterans differ from those of male counter-parts, therefore, in 2004, the U.S. Veterans Administration sponsored a Women's Health Research Agenda-Setting Conference. As a result of that conference the VA established Women's Health Scientific Review Board and funded various gender-specific research projects. Funding has been provided for: Sexual Violence and Gynecologic Health, Evaluation of MST Screening, Treatment, Stigma, gender and other barriers to VA care.

Additionally, two new studies will be initiated in 2008; a National Survey of Women Veterans; and a Women Veteran Cohort Study. This will be the first such study since the 1980 census.

For specific information contact the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Women Veterans Health, www1.va.gov/wvhp/page.cfm?pg=16.

US Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Health Administration Women Veterans Program Managers

Ann Thraikill, Palo Alto Health Care System (HCS)
(650) 493-5000 ext. 64153

Julie Laguardia, Northern California Health Care System, (925) 372-2494

Adrienne French, Fresno Health Care System
(559) 225-6100 ext. 5446

Cheryl Wenell, San Francisco Health Care System
(415) 221-4810 ext. 3956

Gina Gutierrez-Rawson, Long Beach Health Care System, (562) 826-8000 ext. 2534

Lisa Roybal, Loma Linda Health Care System,
(909) 825-7084 ext.2985

Leslie Satz, San Diego Health Care System
(619) 400-5087

Harrier Cagatay, West Los Angeles Medical Center,
(310) 268-3487

Callie Wight, Sepulveda Amulatory Care Center, (818)
895-9555

Minority Veterans Program Coordinators

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Rueben Soto

Northern California Health Care System
925-372-2883

Maurice Turner

Fresno Health Care System
559-225-6100 ext. 5990

Charlie Lonon

Long Beach Health Care System
562-826-5373

Veterans Homes opening in 2009 and 2010 Accepting Letters of Intent

Veterans Homes in West Los Angeles, Ventura County, and Lancaster currently under construction, are accepting letters of intent from veterans interested in living in the new homes.

Lancaster and Ventura are scheduled to open in the Spring of 2009.

Groundbreaking for the Fresno and Redding homes is expected to take place by Fall of 2008.

Once all of the new homes are online and operating, the California Department of Veterans Affairs will have eight veterans homes in California, as the five new homes join Yountville, Barstow and Chula Vista.

Anyone interested in submitting a statement to apply for admission West Los Angeles, Ventura or Lancaster may get the forms and instructions at: www.cdva.ca.gov/homes.

More VA Resources...

There are U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Offices (VARO), state benefit offices, vet centers and medical facilities. To talk to someone you can visit your local VA office or call the following numbers:

VA Benefits: 1-800-827-1000 for burial, Civilian Health and Medical program CHAMPVA, Death Pension, Dependency Indemnity Compensation, Direct Deposit, Directions to VA Benefits Regional Offices, Disability Compensation, Disability Pension, Education, Home Loan Guaranty, Life Insurance, Medical Care, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment.

Education (G.I. Bill): 1-800-442-4551

Health Care Benefits: 1-877-222-8387

Income Verification and Means Testing: 1-800-929-8387

Life Insurance: 1-800-669-8477

Mammography Helpline: 1-888-492-7844

Special issues - Gulf War/Agent Orange/Project Shad/Mustard Agents and Lewisite/Ionizing Radiation: 1-800-794-8387

Status of Headstone and Markers: 1-800-697-6947

Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD): 1-800-829-4833

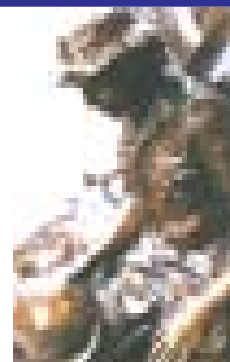
Suicide Call Center: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

(Source: VA website www.vba.gov)

Suicide Prevention Hotline
1-800-273-8255

For services by county contact the California County Veterans Service Officers at :www.cacvso.org.

Women Veteran Resources



For information on women veterans services and benefits, please visit the following websites:

The Center for Women Veterans --

www.va.gov/womenvet

Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents--

www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/fedben.pdf

National Center for PTSD --

www.ncptsd.va.gov

VA Benefits for Veterans of Enduring Freedom-Iraqi Freedom --

www.vba.va.gov/EFIF

VHA Online Health Eligibility --

www.va.gov/healtheligibility

VHA: National Center for Health Promotion and Disease --

www.va.gov/NCHP/

womenscorner.asp

HHS Women's Health Website --

www.4women.gov

Homeless Veterans Programs --

www.va.gov/homeless/index.cfm

Minority Veterans Support Groups and Resources

Please contact the following websites:

American Coalition of Filipino Veterans, Inc

Eric Lachica

www.US.Filvets@verizon.net

African-American Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Assn.

www.aaptsdassn.org

National Japanese-American Veterans Council

discovernikkei.org/en/affiliate.php7nid=1265

American G.I. Forum

www.agif.org

Factoid: Did you know that 22 Japanese American Soldiers were awarded the Congressional Medal of Valor?





Mexican American Veterans Memorial to Get Make-Over

The 15-foot marble statue stands amid tall trees on the east lawn of the State Treasurer's Building on

10th Street like a sentry at attention watching over the State Capitol. He has been there since 1975. He has received little care; except for the grass being cut around the foot of his pedestal. The idea to give the memorial a makeover has been a work started in 1993; an idea that hasn't flourished in more than 13 years.

A commission was formed by legislation in 1993 followed by an income tax form check-off. However, the commission had difficulty meeting with regularity or even having enough commissioners to complete a quorum, so more than \$200,000 dollars have been sitting unused for more than a decade.

The Negrete-McCloud legislation (SB599) trims the commission membership and instead of a commission, a seven-member committee will be appointed by the Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs to oversee the design and implementation of the renovation and beautification of the memorial. The committee will also be responsible for raising the funds needed to complete the project.

**From the Pages of the *Kamai Forum* via
JAVA Round Robin newsletter:**

Older Brother-- a Life-Long Hero

By Laurie Au

Anxious to see her oldest brother before he left for war, a little girl of 11 sprinted to Pokai Bay and waved at the departing train; a passing blur of men in brown uniforms.

"I thought, 'Gee, I hope my brother saw me,'" said **Anita Korenaga**, now 77, a lifetime Waianae resident.

A few months after he left, Korenaga received a photo in the mail from her brother, **Shinyei Nakamine** -- a photo of her smiling and waving at the passing train. That was in 1941.

(Please see, **Sister**, on page six)

Help for Non-Citizen Veterans to Become Citizens is Available

There are thousands of men and women in uniform and out, who are fighting for this country, or have fought, who are not yet citizens of the United States of America.

Up until July 2002, the trip to citizenship was just as long and arduous for veterans as it was for anyone. That year, President George Bush signed an executive order to streamline the process for noncitizens who served after Sept. 11, 2001. Another change, an amendment to the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act, facilitated the process for soldiers and sailors who served in periods of conflict during World War I and II, as well as Korea and Vietnam.

Those who served between 1978 and 2001, however, were excluded from the process, but a proposal that may become part of a new immigration bill, if passed, would make these veterans also eligible.

Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren, chair of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security and International Law, was quoted in a recent *San Jose Mercury News* article; "If someone wants to risk their life for their United States, I think that says more about their patriotism than a person who is an American by an accident of birth."

Under Bush's executive order, each branch of the military is supposed to provide a point of contact for service members applying for expedited citizenship. They are not, however, uniform. The Navy and Marines use judge advocate general and civilian lawyers, while the Army and Air Force utilize their personnel commands.

In 2004, another law was passed to eliminate application fees and allow military citizenship applications to be finalized at U.S. embassies, consulates and military bases around the world.

This past summer, a toll-free number was launched to assist service members, veterans and their families get information on immigration and citizenship matters. That toll-free number is **1-877-247-4645**.

If you know of a veteran or someone on active duty who qualifies for expedited citizenship, please, pass the toll free-number to them.



California Department of Veterans Affairs

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(Retired Annuitant)

Jaime Arteaga
Editor

For more information on services and benefits
www.cdva.ca.gov

Sister...(from page five)

Sixty-three years after his death in World War II, Korenaga still visits his grave at the National Cemetery of the Pacific several times a year.

As a recent ceremony at the cemetery ended, Korenaga and her husband placed a fresh bouquet of flowers next to Nakamine's plot with a little blue colored flag that distinguishes him as a Medal of Honor recipient.

Nakamine, a private with Hawaii's famed 100th Battalion Infantry, was recognized posthumously by President Clinton in 2000.

On June 2, 1944, his platoon was pinned down by intense machine-gun fire in La Torreto, Italy, Nakamine, on his own initiative, destroyed one machine-gun nest and successfully led the attack on another, killing and capturing several soldiers.

Nakamine, 24, was killed by a burst of machine-gun fire while trying to destroy a third machine-gun nest.

"I wish my mom and dad were alive to see the honor that was extended to him. It's sad, and yet we shouldn't forget what they did for us," Korenaga said, "I want my grandchildren to continue what we are doing today so that our family never forgets Shinyei."

Korenaga, the only daughter, and the youngest of four, remembers picking kiawe beans with her brother and selling them to plantation workers in Waianae. He taught her how to ride a bike. He bought his baby sister her first pair of shoes.

And the money received for his death paid her tuition at the University of Hawaii, where she earned a teaching degree to later become a teacher at Waianae High School. "He really took care of me all my life," Korenaga said.

Rosie the Riveter Gets a Park in Richmond Where Ships Were Built

One of the most endearing World War II homefront symbols was Normon Rockwell's "Rosie the Riveter." The poster called on women to do their part in helping America win the war. By the millions, women went to work in shipyards and airplane manufacturing plants, supplying much needed equipment needed on the many fronts.

One of these places that hummed with activity day and night were the shipyards in Richmond, California. Women by the thousands worked those shifts producing 747 ships by war's end. What was accomplished by this past generation of women will be forever celebrated. This memorial to the homefront, reflects where many believe the war was won.

The **Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historic Park** is a work in process along the San Francisco Bay waterfront of Richmond. Visitors to the park are provided with a map and directions to the park's landmarks.

Shipyard No. 3 is home to the USS Red Oak Victory, an ammunition ship built in Richmond this is being restored by a volunteer group of World War II veterans.

The WWII era is seen as a time in history when women were freed from 'just' being housewives to women seeking and succeeding in careers other than as mothers and housewives changing the American fabric forever.

www.nps.gov/rori

www.cdva.ca.gov/calvetloans

800-952-5626



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